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## CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

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Do I exaggerate? Consider what the House committee found about the NASA shuttle failure. It charged that even today the space agency does not understand how or why defects went undetected in its testing and approval of the shuttle's faulty booster rockets. The House went on to report that "The committee is concerned that without such an understanding, NASA will not be able to detect a similar breakdown in its system of checks and balances in the future."

Mr. President, until now there has been virtually no challenge of the assumption by SDI that it will be able to move the several thousand massive battle stations required by SDI into space and into orbit in space. Several of us have questioned the immense cost of such an operation.

We have pointed out that without a sudden, wholly unforeseen revolution in the technology of space transportation the cost of deployment alone will be hundreds of billions of dollars. But now there must be a real question as to whether SDI can succeed in transporting this hardware into space at any cost. After all the House committee has found that NASA, which operates the shuttle, does not even understand why its rockets fail. So there is some question as to whether it can successfully continue to operate even our current very limited and largely experimental space transportation program. Can NASA then take on the colossal SDI mission? Who are we trying to kid?

Who is to blame for all this? The House argues that the pressure for rapid fire performance that comes from the White House and the Congress is to blame. Here, Mr. President, is a message that comes through loud and clear on the strategic defense initiative. The message is that the limited space shuttle system may or may not work in the next few years. But that we should give NASA more time, more money, and less pressure. For SDI the message is that even the problem of transporting the hardware into space probably cannot be accomplished. If it is to be given that very long shot chance of accomplishment, it will take much more time and a great deal more money.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the story to which I have referred to in the New York Times on October 8 by Philip Boffey headlined "Panel Warns NASA May Lack Shuttle Expertise" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Oct. 8, 1986]

PANEL WARNS NASA MAY LACK SHUTTLE EXPERTISE

(By Philip M. Boffey)

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7.—A Congressional committee warned today that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration might lack the technical expertise to operate the space shuttle program properly.

The panel, the House Science and Technology Committee, expressed its concern in a report on the findings of its own investigation into the destruction of the space shuttle Challenger.

Panel members concluded that the entire Congress, the White House and even the committee itself had "played a contributing role in creating" pressure "that directly contributed to unsafe launch operations."

The committee also warned that, even today, "the pressure to push for an unrealistic number of flights continues to exist in some sectors of NASA and jeopardizes the promotion of a 'safety first' attitude throughout the shuttle program."

Some committee members stressed that Congress had also failed to provide adequate financing for the space agency to meet the schedule pressures.

The report also questioned the safety of a new booster rocket made of lightweight carbon filaments rather than steel. The committee urged the space agency to consider sending its heaviest payloads aloft on expendable rockets "so that there will be no need to use" the filament booster rocket, which is under development by the space agency and its contractors.

The committee's report, which was unanimously approved by voice vote today, drew heavily on the data and findings of the extensive investigations previously conducted by a Presidential commission and by the space agency itself. But it supplemented these with 10 formal hearings and numerous staff interviews with officials and experts.

The report noted that "as a rule" the House committee agreed with the findings of the Presidential commission, which was headed by former Secretary of State William P. Rogers. But it expressed disagreement with some of the commission's findings or the relative importance attached to them, and it raised some concerns that were not stressed by the commission.

DOUBTS ABOUT NASA

In one such instance, the committee said it "is not assured that NASA has adequate technical expertise to conduct the space shuttle program properly." It noted that the space agency "has suffered staffing reductions in key areas over several years" and had lost top technical personnel because it could not compete with the higher salaries in private industry.

The committee said it had insufficient information to make "a formal finding on this matter" but would conduct "an in-depth review of NASA's technical ability" in the next Congress.

The committee also charged that even today the space agency did not understand how or why defects went undetected in its testing and approval of the shuttle's faulty booster rockets.

"The committee is concerned that without such an understanding, NASA will not be able to detect a similar breakdown in its system of checks and balances in the future," the report said.

The committee reached further than the Rogers commission in pinning part of the blame for Jan. 28 disaster on Congress and the White House for creating the pressures that led NASA to push for a launching schedule of 24 flights a year to make the shuttle a commercial success.

The committee said it differed somewhat from the conclusion of the Rogers commission that a flawed decision making process in NASA was a central cause of the accident. "The underlying problem," it said, "was not poor communication or inadequate procedures" but rather "poor technical decisionmaking over a period of several years by

top NASA and contractor personnel" who "failed to act decisively" to solve problems in the rocket joints.

In other proclaimed departures from the Rogers commission, the committee said it was more concerned about the safety of the shuttle's main engines and had recommended a new approach to overcoming defects in the landing gear, wheels and brakes.

RECOGNITION OF SENATOR SASSER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. SASSER, is recognized for not to exceed 5 minutes.

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1987

Mr. SASSER. Mr. President, today, along with 55 of my colleagues, I am introducing the Prompt Payment Act Amendments of 1987. The purpose of this legislation is simple and direct: To eliminate the ambiguities and close the loopholes in the Prompt Payment Act of 1982. My colleagues will recall that the Prompt Payment Act addresses problems in getting the Federal Government to pay its bills on time to those contractors who furnish goods and services to the Government.

At the outset, let me point out that the amendments to the Prompt Payment Act made by this bill are identical to those contained in S. 2479, the Prompt Payment Amendments of 1986. S. 2479 was unanimously passed by the Senate in the closing days of the 99th Congress. Unfortunately, time did not allow for consideration of this important measure in the House.

The Prompt Payment Act has led to significant improvements in the bill-paying practices of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, many Federal agencies exploit ambiguities or loopholes in the act to pay contractors late while avoiding late payment interest penalties called for in the act.

Many of these problems have been chronicled by the Coalition for Prompt Pay and its extremely effective director, Kenton Pattie. And while the Office of Management and Budget cheerfully claimed that 99 percent of the Government's bills were paid on time following passage of the Prompt Payment Act, the evidence to the contrary was mounting.

Under the leadership of my distinguished colleague from Virginia, Senator TRIBLE, the Small Business Committee built an extensive record documenting the act's shortcomings. In response to the foot-dragging evident in some agencies, Senator TRIBLE moved forward in the 99th Congress with remedial legislation. I want to commend Senator TRIBLE for the yeoman's effort he put into this legislation throughout the 99th Congress. He played a crucial role in moving these necessary reforms forward and I am